

**IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES**

In re PATENT application of:

Applicant(s): Gerhard Duernberger
Serial No: 10/596,992
Filing Date: July 5, 2006
Title: TURNING PROFILE
Examiner: Adriana Figueroa
Art Unit: 3633

Docket No: TURKP0133US

APPEAL BRIEF

Mail Stop Appeal Brief-Patents
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Dear Sir:

The undersigned submits this brief for the Board's consideration of the appeal of the Examiner's decision, mailed May 26, 2011, finally rejecting claims 1, 3-8 and 10-17 in the above-identified application.

In the event an additional fee or further extension of time is necessary, the Commissioner is authorized to charge any additional fee which may be required, and further to consider this a petition for an extension of time to make the filing of this brief timely, to Deposit Account No. 18-0988 under Docket No. TURKP0133US.

I. Real Party in Interest

The real party in interest in the present appeal is Kaindl Flooring GmbH.

II. Related Appeals and Interferences

Neither appellant nor appellant's legal representative are aware of any appeals or interferences which will directly affect, which will be directly affected by, or which will have a bearing on the Board's decision in the pending appeal.

III. Status of Claims

Claims 1, 3-8 and 10-17 have been finally rejected and claims 2 and 9 have been cancelled. Claims 1, 3-8 and 10-17 are the claims on appeal. A correct copy of these claims is reproduced in the Claims Appendix.

IV. Status of Amendments

An amendment was filed subsequent to the issuance of the Office Action dated May 26, 2011, from which this appeal is taken. According to an Advisory Action dated August 23, 2011, the amendment would be entered for purposes of appeal.

Also, an Amendment is being filed concurrently with this appeal brief to improve the form of claims 6 and 14 for purposes of this appeal. Entry of the Amendment is anticipated and the claims reproduced in the Claims Appendix reflect entry of the Amendment.

V. Summary of Claimed Subject Matter

The following is a concise explanation of the subject matter defined in each of the independent claims involved in the appeal, which refers to the specification by page and line number in brackets, and to the drawing by reference characters.

Claim 1

Connecting means (3, 4, 5, 6) made in such a way that one said connecting means can be connected with the other connecting means in a positive fit in two directions (7, 10; 20, 21) that are perpendicular relative to each other [8/8-15], and wherein said one (4, 6) and other (3, 5) connecting means are formed by respective panel edges that have the same geometry [7/18-20], and each panel edge has a uniform cross-sectional portion bounded by top (12) and bottom surfaces of the panels (1, 2) and a profiled cross-sectional portion extending from the uniform cross-sectional portion, each profiled portion having the same geometry but inverted with respect to one another [4/26-30].

Claim 8

Panels (1, 2) of rectangular shape [1/8] having lateral connecting elements (3, 4, 5, 6) provided along lateral edges of the panels [10/8 and 9], which lateral connecting elements are configured to be connected with each other with a positive fit in two directions (7, 10, 20, 21) that are perpendicular relative to each other [8/8-15], and longitudinal connecting elements (3, 4, 5, 6) provided along longitudinal edges of the panels, which longitudinal connecting elements are configured to be connected with

each other by a turning motion [10/9-11], and wherein said lateral connecting elements are formed by respective panel edges that have the same geometry [7/18-20], and each panel edge has a uniform cross-sectional portion bounded by top (12) and bottom surfaces of the panels and a profiled cross-sectional portion extending from the uniform cross-sectional portion, each profiled portion having the same geometry but inverted with respect to one another [4/26-30].

Claim 16

A panel (1, 2) of rectangular shape [1/8] having first and second lateral connecting elements (3, 4, 5, 6) provided along respective first and second lateral edges of the panel [10/8 and 9], which first and second lateral connecting elements are configured to be connected respectively with like second and first lateral connecting elements of adjacent panels with a positive fit in two directions (7, 10, 20, 21) that are perpendicular relative to each other [8/8-15], and first and second longitudinal connecting elements (3, 4, 5, 6) provided along respective first and second longitudinal edges of the panel, which first and second longitudinal connecting elements are configured to be connected respectively with like second and first longitudinal connecting elements of adjacent panels by a turning motion [10/9-11], and wherein said first and second lateral connecting elements are formed by respective panel edges that have the same geometry [7/18-20], and each panel edge has a uniform cross-sectional portion bounded by top (12) and bottom surfaces of the panels and a profiled cross-sectional portion extending from the uniform cross-sectional portion, each profiled portion having the same geometry but inverted with respect to one another [4/26-30].

VI. Grounds of Objection/Rejection to Be Reviewed on Appeal

A. Claims 1 and 3 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,505,452 (herein "Hannig").

B. Claims 4-7 and 17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hannig in view of U.S. Patent Publication No. 2003/0024199 (herein "Pervan").

C. Claims 8, 10, 13 and 16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hannig in view of U.S. Patent No. 7,065,935 (herein "Eisermann").

D. Claims 11, 12, 14 and 15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hannig in view of Eisermann and further in view of Pervan.

VII. Argument

The rejections advanced by the Examiner are improper and should be reversed for at least the following reasons.

Summary

In a typical floor paneling system held together by shaped edges, the edges have complimentary yet different geometries. U.S. Patent No. 6, 505,452 to Hannig shows this construction in various embodiments. For example, in FIG. 1 of Hannig, reproduced below, the edge of one panel includes a projection 6, while the edge of the complimentary piece includes a recess 20.

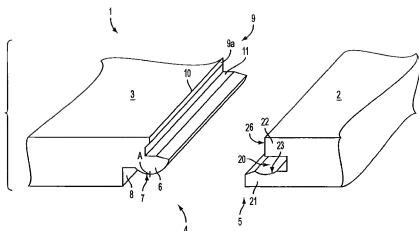


FIG. 1

Although these geometries may be effective in holding the panel edges together, they have the disadvantage of having different geometries. This requires different molds or different milling heads and/or milling processes. Accordingly, the manufacturing methods require much effort and are expensive.

The subject application discloses a pair of interlocking connecting means that have the same, but inverted, geometries. As shown in FIGS. 1a-1c of the present application, reproduced below, the same but inverted geometries allow the panels to form a positive fit in two directions that are perpendicular relative to each other, while allowing for a simpler and cheaper manufacturing process.

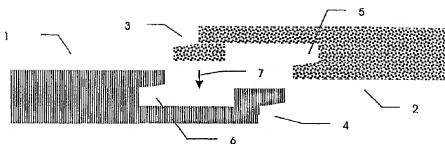


Fig. 1a

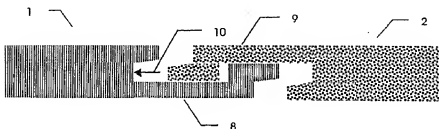


Fig. 1b

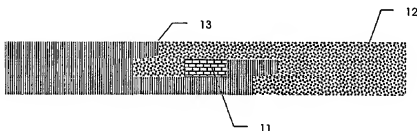


Fig. 1c

A. Rejection of Claims 1 and 3 Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b)

Claims 1 and 3 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Hannig.

Claim 1

The Examiner's remarks in support of the rejection are as follows:

Regarding claim 1, Hannig discloses connecting means 42, 43 made in such a way that one said connecting means can be connected with the other connecting means in a positive fit in two directions that are perpendicular relative to each other, (Fig8) and wherein said one and other connecting means are formed by respective panel edges 44, 45 that have the same geometry, and each panel edge has a uniform cross-sectional portion bounded by top (0) and bottom (V) surfaces of the

panels and a profiled cross-sectional portion 47, 48 extending from the uniform cross-sectional portion, each profiled portion having the same geometry but inverted with respect to one another, (Fig 8), (Col 9, Lines 65-67, Col 10, Lines 1-4).

Office Action dated May 23, 2011, pages 3 and 4.

Reversal of the rejection is respectfully requested for at least the following reasons.

Claim 1 recites connecting means made in such a way that one said connecting means can be connected with the other connecting means in a positive fit in two directions that are perpendicular relative to each other. In accordance with the present invention the one and other connecting means are formed by respective panel edges that have the same geometry. Each panel edge has a uniform cross-sectional portion bounded by top and bottom surfaces of the panels and a profiled cross-sectional portion extending from the uniform cross-sectional portion, each profiled portion having the same geometry but inverted with respect to one another.

According to the Examiner, the profiled cross-sectional portions 47 and 48 of Hannig have the same but inverted geometry. This is not the case. As is evident from Fig. 8 of Manning, reproduced below, the geometries are different in that a space L1 is provided between the upper-side hook portion 47 and the lower-side web 49 of one panel and not between the lower-side hook portion 48 of the other panel and the upper-side web 46 of the first panel. Consequently, the geometries are not substantially the same, taking into account an advantage of the claimed configuration being the avoidance of different milling heads and/or processes.

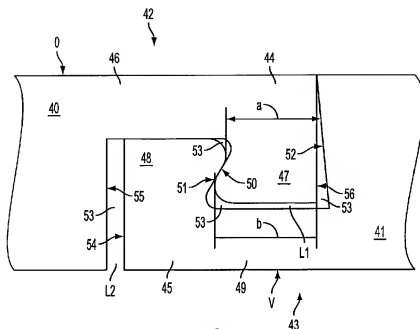


FIG. 8

The Examiner contends, however, in the Advisory Action of August 23, 2011, that "portions 47 and 48 have the same shape which is the same as having the same geometry as can be seen clearly in Figure 8; although the dimensions are slightly different to create the space L1, the portions have the same geometry." Thus, the Examiner contends the portions 47 and 48 have the same geometry even though they do not have the same dimensions. But if they do not have substantially the same dimensions, they do not have the same geometry. The claim recites the "same geometry", not the "same shape".

Therefore, for at least the foregoing reasons, Hannig does not disclose the subject matter of claim 1 and the rejection should be reversed. The rejections as applied to dependent claims 3-7 should also be reversed for at least the same reasons.

Claim 3

Claim 3 depends from claim 1 and additionally recites that the profiled cross-sectional portions are configured so that they can be connected by lowering the one connecting means relative to the other connecting means and then pushing the connecting means towards each other in a direction perpendicular relative to the lowering motion.

The Examiner's remarks in support of the rejection are as follows:

Regarding claim 3, Hannig discloses wherein the profiled cross-sectional portions 47, 48 are configured so that they can be connected by lowering the one connecting means 42 relative to the other connecting means 43 and then pushing the connecting means towards each other in a direction perpendicular relative to the lowering motion, (Fig 8), (Col 10, Lines 43-48).

Office Action dated May 23, 2011, page 4.

Reversal of the rejection is respectfully requested for at least the following additional reasons.

Contrary to the Examiner's assertion, Hannig does not teach that portions 47, 48 are configured so that they can be connected by lowering and then pushing the connecting means towards each other in a direction perpendicular relative to the lowering motion. Rather, the panels of Hannig referenced by the Examiner are simply lowered onto each other.

For example, the passage cited by the Examiner reads:

This facilitates the insertion of hook projections 47 and 48, in that hook profiles 42 and 43 are slowly expanded in elastic fashion during a connecting movement that is perpendicular to the plane of installation.

Hannig col. 10, lines 43-48.

In other words, the hook projections are elastically deformed as they are pushed past each other in a direction perpendicular to the plane of installation (for example, the

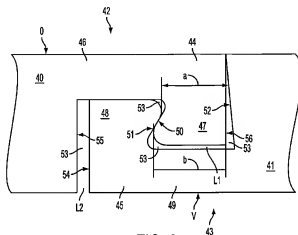


FIG. 8

floor) in order to form an interference fit. The panels cannot be pushed towards one another in a direction perpendicular to this downward movement. In fact, the panels are incapable of movement in the left/right directions relative to the page of Fig. 8 because portion 47 is trapped between the surfaces 50 and 52.

Therefore, for at least the foregoing reasons, Hannig does not disclose the subject matter of claim 3 and the rejection should be reversed.

B. Rejection of Claims 4-7 and 17 Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 4-7 and 17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hannig in view of Pervan.

The Examiner's remarks in support of this rejection are as follows:

Regarding claims 4 and 17, Hannig discloses connecting means according to claim 1, but does not disclose separate locking means inserted between the panel edges after the panel edges have been connected together for locking the panel edges in such connected state wherein the separate locking means is a securing pin. However, Pervan teaches connecting means having a separate locking means 52 inserted

between the panel edges, wherein the separate locking means is a securing pin (Fig 14c), (par 179). Therefore, it would have been obvious to a person having ordinary skill in the arts at the time of the applicant's invention to modify the connection means of Hannig to include a separate locking means as taught by Pervan in order to counteract changes in the properties of the floor panels caused by moisture (Abstract).

The limitation "after the panel edges have been connected together" is regarded to as functional language and while features of an apparatus may be recited either structurally or functionally, claims directed to an apparatus must be distinguished from the prior art in terms of structure rather than function. See MPEP § 2114.

Office Action dated May 23, 2011, pages 4 and 5.

The combination of Hannig and Pervan lacks a reasonable basis. Hannig already has a means for locking the panels together, so there simply is no reason to include any of the locking devices of Pervan, even if there was some meaningful way of incorporating those locking devices into the connecting means of Hannig. Further, the proposed combinations would so alter the panels of Hannig that they would no longer interconnect in their intended manner.

The Examiner contends, however, in the Advisory Action of August 23, 2011 that:

In this case, Hannig was used for the teaching of panels having connecting means that are perpendicular relative to each other and profiled cross sectional portions having the same geometry but inverted with respect to one another. Pervan was used for the teaching of separate locking means that counteract changes in the properties of the floor panels due to moisture.

Advisory Action dated August 23, 2011.

However, it is not seen how the interference fit of Hannig will become loose during any expansion and contraction due to moisture. That is, it seems the connecting

means will remain engaged during any contraction or expansion of the boards. Moreover, adding a compensation seal 52 in the manner taught by Pervan would appear to completely change the operation of Hannig, destroying its intended purpose of "snap[ing] together into a defined end position" (Hannig, col. 10, lines 34-35). Adding the compensation seal 52 of Pervan would also require a complete redesign of the locking mechanism of Hannig in order for it to work at all. Therefore, there is no reasonable basis to combine Hannig with Pervan, and the rejection should be reversed.

Claim 4

Claim 4 depends from claim 1 and additionally recites a separate locking means inserted between the panel edges after the panel edges have been connected together for locking the panel edges in such connected state.

The Examiner's remarks in support of this rejection are as follows:

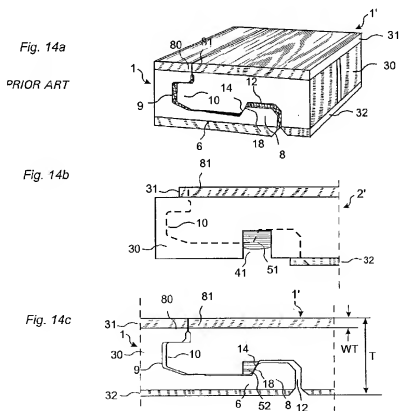
Pervan teaches connecting means having a separate locking means 52 inserted between the panel edges, wherein the separate locking means is a securing pin (Fig 14c), (par 179)... The limitation "after the panel edges have been connected together" is regarded to as functional language and while features of an apparatus may be recited either structurally or functionally, claims directed to an apparatus must be distinguished from the prior art in terms of structure rather than function. See MPEP § 2114.

Office Action dated May 23, 2011, page 5.

In rejecting the claim, the Examiner completely ignores the limitation "after the panel edges have been connected together." Although apparatus claims must be distinguished from the prior art in terms of structure rather than function, this functional language also conveys structure: the separate locking means must at least be capable

of being inserted between the panel edges after the panel edges have been connected together.

However, the compensation seal 52 of Pervan, illustrated below in FIGS. 14a-14c, is not even capable of insertion between the panel edges after the panel edges have been connected together. Rather, Pervan details that an elastic material 51 is arranged and fixed in the groove 41. Subsequently, a machining operation removes or reshapes the elastic material 51 into the compensation seal 52 which constitutes the active locking surface in the locking groove 12. (Pervan, [0175-0176]). In other words, the compensation seal 52 is a part of the edge of the panel and is formed by machining processes while a part thereof. It is not designed to be inserted between panel edges after the panel edges have been connected together. Rather, it is actually part of the panel edge.



Therefore, for at least the foregoing reasons, the combination of Hannig and Pervan does not disclose the subject matter of claim 4 and the rejection should be reversed.

Claim 6

Claim 6 depends from claim 1 and additionally recites a separate locking means which can be pushed into a channel formed between the panel edges, wherein at least one external dimension of the separate locking means is greater than the corresponding internal dimension of the channel, so that the separate locking means can be held in the channel by press fit and the separate locking means consists of a compressible material such as plastics.

The Examiner's remarks in support of this rejection are as follows:

Hanning modified by Pervan discloses as disclosed in claim 1, Pervan further discloses connecting means having a separate locking means 52 that consists of a compressible material such as plastics, which can be pushed into a channel formed between the panel edge, (Fig 14c), (Par 71, 76).

Hanning discloses at least one external dimension of the panel edges 44, 45 is greater than the corresponding internal dimension of a channel 53, (Fig 8). The modified connecting means would have the separate locking means being held in the channel by press fit and the separate locking means.

Office Action dated May 23, 2011, pages 5 and 6.

However, the compensation seal 52 of Pervan, illustrated below in FIGS. 14a-14c, is not a separate locking means which can be pushed into a channel formed between the panel edges. Rather, Pervan details that an elastic material 51 is arranged and fixed in the groove 41. Subsequently, a machining operation removes or reshapes

the elastic material 51 into the compensation seal 52 which constitutes the active locking surface in the locking groove 12. (Pervan, [0175-0176]). In other words, the compensation seal 52 is a part of the edge of the panel and is formed by machining processes while a part thereof. It is not a separate locking means which can be pushed into a channel formed between the panel edges. Rather, it is actually part of the panel edge.

Therefore, for at least the foregoing reasons, the combination of Hannig and Pervan does not disclose the subject matter of claim 6 and the rejection should be reversed.

Claim 17

Claim 17 depends from claim 4 and additionally recites that the separate locking means is a securing pin.

The Examiner's remarks in support of this rejection are given above and assert that Pervan discloses a securing pin in Fig. 14c and/or paragraph [0179].

Fig. 14c is reproduced above in relation to claim 4, but does not show a securing pin. Rather, Fig. 14c shows that the compensation seal 52 is the active locking surface of locking groove 12. Paragraph [0179] reads as follows:

A joint system according to the above embodiment is especially suitable for use together with underfloor heating and in surroundings where the relative humidity varies significantly during the year. The elastic locking means or compensation seal 52 can be arranged optionally on the locking element 8 (as in FIG. 14d) or in the locking groove 12 (as in FIGS. 14c and 14e) or in both these parts, and it can be formed with many different geometries having different angles and radii which can facilitate inward angling and displacement. The elastic locking means or compensation seal 52 can also be combined with a material seal 20 and a

joint seal 55 according to the previously described embodiments of the invention.

Again, Pervan discloses that the compensation seal can be arranged on either the locking element 8 or the locking groove 12. However, nowhere does Pervan disclose a securing pin.

Therefore, for at least the foregoing reasons, the combination of Hannig and Pervan does not disclose the subject matter of claim 17 and the rejection should be reversed.

C. Rejection of Claims 8, 10, 13 and 16 Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 8, 10, 13 and 16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hannig in view of U.S. Patent No. 7,065,935 (herein "Eisermann").

The Examiner's remarks in support of this rejection are as follows:

Regarding claims 8 and 16, Hanning discloses panels of rectangular shape having lateral connecting elements 42, 43 provided along lateral edges of the panels, which lateral connecting elements are configured to be connected with each other with a positive fit in two directions that are perpendicular relative to each other, (Fig 8) and longitudinal connecting elements provided along longitudinal edges of the panels (Fig 1); wherein said lateral connecting elements are formed by respective panel edges 44, 45 that have the same geometry, and each panel edge has a uniform cross-sectional portion bounded by top (0) and bottom (V) surfaces of the panels and a profiled cross-sectional portion 47, 48 extending from the uniform cross-sectional portion, each profiled portion having the same geometry but inverted with respect to one another, (Fig 8), (Col 9, Lines 65-67, Col 10, Lines 1-4).

Hanning does not disclose the longitudinal connecting elements are configured to be connected with each other by a turning motion. However, Eisermann teaches panels having longitudinal connecting elements are configured to be connected with each other by a turning motion (Fig 3, 4, 8). Therefore, it would have been obvious to a person

having ordinary skill in the arts at the time of the applicant's invention to modify the panels of Hannig to include connecting elements in the longitudinal direction as taught by Eisermann in order to simplify the method for laying and interlocking panels and to improve the durability of the fastening system.

Office Action dated May 23, 2011, pages 6 and 7.

Reversal of the rejection is respectfully requested for at least the following reasons.

Claims 8 & 16

Both independent claims 8 and 16 recite that each panel edge has a uniform cross-sectional portion bounded by top and bottom surfaces of the panels and a profiled cross-sectional portion extending from the uniform cross-sectional portion, each profiled portion having the same geometry but inverted with respect to one another.

According to the Examiner, the profiled cross-sectional portions 47 and 48 of Hannig have the same but inverted geometry. This is not the case for the reasons discussed above in connection with claim 1, which are here incorporated by reference for the sake of brevity.

Further, the combination of Hannig and Eisermann lacks a reasonable basis. Hannig already has a means for locking the panels together, so there simply is no reason to include any of the locking devices of Eisermann, even if there was some meaningful way of incorporating those locking devices into the connecting means of Hannig. Further, the proposed combinations would so alter the panels of Hannig that they would no longer interconnect in their intended manner.

Therefore, for at least the foregoing reasons, the combination of Hannig and Eisermann does not disclose the subject matter of claims 8 and 16 and the rejection should be reversed. The rejections as applied to claims 10-15 and 17 should also be reversed for at least the same reasons.

Claim 10

Claim 10 depends from claim 8 and additionally recites that the lateral connecting elements are configured so that they can be connected by lowering the one connecting element relative to the other connecting element and then pushing the connecting elements towards each other in a direction perpendicular relative to the lowering motion. The rejection of claim 10 should be reversed for the additional reason discussed above in connection with claim 3, which reasoning is hereby incorporated by reference for the sake of brevity.

D. Rejection of Claims 11, 12, 14 and 15 Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 11, 12, 14 and 15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hannig in view of Eisermann and further in view of Pervan.

For the same reasons given above, the combination of Hannig with Eiserman and Pervan lacks motivation and would destroy the intended purpose of Hannig. Therefore, the claims are allowable and the rejection should be reversed.

Claim 11

Claim 11 depends from claim 8 and additionally recites a locking device insertable into a space between the lateral connecting elements when coupled together to lock the lateral connecting elements against separation.

In support of the rejection, the Examiner asserts on Page 8 of the Office action of May 23, 2011 that "Pervan discloses a locking device 52 insertable into a space between the lateral connecting elements when coupled together to lock the lateral connecting elements against separation, (Fig 14c), (Par 71, 76)."

As similarly discussed above in relation to claim 6, the compensation seal 52 is not designed for insertion and is not insertable into a space between the lateral connecting elements when coupled together. Rather, the compensation seal 52 is already in place and part of the edge before the panels are coupled together.

Therefore, the rejection of claim 11 should be reversed for this additional reason.

Claim 14

Claim 14 depends from claim 8 and additionally recites a separate locking device that can be pushed into a channel formed by the lateral connecting elements when coupled together, wherein at least one external dimension of the separate locking device is greater than the corresponding internal dimension of the channel, so that the separate locking device can be held in the channel by press fit and the separate locking device and/or the lateral locking elements is/are made of a compressible material. The rejection of claim 14 should be reversed for the additional reason discussed above in

connection with claim 6, which reasoning is hereby incorporated by reference for the sake of brevity.

VIII. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the claims are patentable over the applied art and that the rejections advance by the Examiner should be reversed.

Respectfully submitted,

RENNER, OTTO, BOISSELLE & SKLAR, L.L.P.

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Claims Appendix

1. Connecting means made in such a way that one said connecting means can be connected with the other connecting means in a positive fit in two directions that are perpendicular relative to each other, and wherein said one and other connecting means are formed by respective panel edges that have the same geometry, and each panel edge has a uniform cross-sectional portion bounded by top and bottom surfaces of the panels and a profiled cross-sectional portion extending from the uniform cross-sectional portion, each profiled portion having the same geometry but inverted with respect to one another.

3. Connecting means according to claim 1, wherein the profiled cross-sectional portions are configured so that they can be connected by lowering the one connecting means relative to the other connecting means and then pushing the connecting means towards each other in a direction perpendicular relative to the lowering motion.

4. Connecting means according to claim 1, comprising a separate locking means inserted between the panel edges after the panel edges have been connected together for locking the panel edges in such connected state.

5. Connecting means according to claim 4, wherein the connecting means is step-shaped or stair-shaped.

6. Connecting means according to claim 1, comprising a separate locking means which can be pushed into a channel formed between the panel edges, wherein at least one external dimension of the separate locking means is greater than the corresponding internal dimension of the channel, so that the separate locking means can be held in the channel by press fit and the separate locking means consists of a compressible material such as plastics.

7. Panels with connecting means provided laterally according to claim 1, which are formed in particular as laminate flooring panels comprising a base board and a decorative layer.

8. Panels of rectangular shape having lateral connecting elements provided along lateral edges of the panels, which lateral connecting elements are configured to be connected with each other with a positive fit in two directions that are perpendicular relative to each other, and longitudinal connecting elements provided along longitudinal edges of the panels, which longitudinal connecting elements are configured to be connected with each other by a turning motion, and wherein said lateral connecting elements are formed by respective panel edges that have the same geometry, and each panel edge has a uniform cross-sectional portion bounded by top and bottom surfaces of the panels and a profiled cross-sectional portion extending from the uniform cross-sectional portion, each profiled portion having the same geometry but inverted with respect to one another.

10. Panels according to claim 8, wherein the lateral connecting elements are configured so that they can be connected by lowering the one connecting element relative to the other connecting element and then pushing the connecting elements towards each other in a direction perpendicular relative to the lowering motion.

11. Panels according to claim 8, including a locking device insertable into a space between the lateral connecting elements when coupled together to lock the lateral connecting elements against separation.

12. Panels according to claim 11, wherein the locking device has a substantially rectangular cross-section.

13. Panels according to claim 8, wherein the lateral connecting elements are step-shaped.

14. Panels according to claim 8, including a separate locking device that can be pushed into a channel formed by the lateral connecting elements when coupled together, wherein at least one external dimension of the separate locking device is greater than the corresponding internal dimension of the channel, so that the separate locking device can be held in the channel by press fit and the separate locking device and/or the lateral locking elements is/are made of a compressible material.

15. Panels according to claim 8, wherein panels are formed as laminate flooring panels including a base board and a decorative layer.

16. A panel of rectangular shape having first and second lateral connecting elements provided along respective first and second lateral edges of the panel, which first and second lateral connecting elements are configured to be connected respectively with like second and first lateral connecting elements of adjacent panels with a positive fit in two directions that are perpendicular relative to each other, and first and second longitudinal connecting elements provided along respective first and second longitudinal edges of the panel, which first and second longitudinal connecting elements are configured to be connected respectively with like second and first longitudinal connecting elements of adjacent panels by a turning motion, and wherein said first and second lateral connecting elements are formed by respective panel edges that have the same geometry, and each panel edge has a uniform cross-sectional portion bounded by top and bottom surfaces of the panels and a profiled cross-sectional portion extending from the uniform cross-sectional portion, each profiled portion having the same geometry but inverted with respect to one another.

17. Connecting means according to claim 4, wherein the separate locking means is a securing pin.

Evidence Appendix

None.

Related Proceedings Appendix

None.